

## Study Reaffirms That Stopping Ocean-Vessels is a Viable Measure to Combat Invasive Species

**(Buffalo, NY April 9, 2008)** - Conservation and organized labour are reaffirming that, in the absence of stringent ballast water regulations, the cessation of ocean-vessel shipping on the Great Lakes can protect the Great Lakes ecosystem.

“Until the problem of aquatic hitchhikers is solved, ocean vessels do not belong on the world’s largest fresh water ecosystem,” said Jennifer Nalbene, Campaign Director for Great Lakes United. “We will continue to work diligently in support of federal regulations, but research continues to emerge that shows the use of transportation alternatives and a cessation of ocean-shipping on the Great Lakes is a viable option.”

A recent report by Grand Valley State University researchers found that a cessation of ocean-vessel access to the Great Lakes would create over 1,300 jobs in the United States and Canada and have little impact on air quality or highway congestion. The report was produced by the same researchers that said the region would incur \$55 million in additional transportation costs associated with a cessation of ocean-shipping on the Great Lakes, and refutes assertions that transshipment would destroy jobs, increase air pollution, and clog roads and rail lines.

“Our economy and our quality of life depend on finding a solution,” said Jim Mahon, Canadian Autoworkers, Local 1520. “Using alternatives to ocean-vessel shipping on the Great Lakes not only protects us from the ravages of aquatic invasive species like the zebra mussel, but it creates transportation sector jobs.”

The groups are working for federal action on both sides of the border to mandate ocean-vessels treat their ballast discharges to a standard that would eradicate invasive species lurking in their ballast tanks. Canada currently has introduced such a standard in the Shipping Act, but given no deadline for implementation, effectively pacifying it. In the United States, legislation is currently before Congress that would require the use of on-board ballast water treatment to meet a discharge standard by a set date.

“For almost fifty years we’ve been paying a heavy price for allowing ocean ships onto the Great Lakes,” said Mahon, “Canada should be embarrassed that the Shipping Act has a ballast water standard but no deadline for implementation.”

“The longer we wait for new U.S. legislation the worse the problem gets and the more costly the solutions,” said Jeff Skelding, National Campaign Director, Healing Our Waters- Great Lakes Coalition. “But there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Legislation is before Congress that would require the use of on-board ballast water treatment and technology to meet a protective standard. We desperately need it.”

Since the St. Lawrence Seaway System opened the lakes to deep-draft international shipping in 1959, 65 percent of the aquatic invasive species that entered the Great Lakes were brought in by ocean-vessels. Research shows that the rate of discovery of invaders in the Great Lakes is correlated with shipping activity, and is amongst the highest rates for any aquatic system in the world. The notorious zebra mussel, first detected 20 years ago in Lake St. Clair, is just one example of an invader who has hitched a ride in ballast, since spreading to 21 U.S. states and the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

Ocean vessels entering the Great Lakes have been mandated to exchange full ballast tanks in the open ocean since the 1990s and in the past two years new regulations require all no-ballast-on-board ocean-vessels (NOBOBs) to physically flush their tanks with salty ocean water to help prevent the release of invasive species. These rules are helpful interim measures supported by the conservation community, but do not fully protect the Lakes from new invaders hitchhiking rides in ballast tanks.

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**Read the reports:**

Phase I: *“Ocean Shipping In the Great Lakes: Transportation Cost Increases That Would Result From a Cessation of Ocean Vessels Shipping”*

Phase II: *“Ocean Shipping in the Great Lakes: Analysis of Issues”*

<http://www.gvsu.edu/business/index.cfm?id=11971F16-DBAF-2179-96B0680A95CC6F83>

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